THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

ol. II. November 13, 1936 Heshvan 28, 5697 No. 14

EDITORIALS

RELIGION'S STAKE IN DEMOCRACY

JEWISH CIVIL LAW AND THE JEWISH RENAISSANCE

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THE STATUS OF THE RABBINATE

By Eugene Kohn

GOOD AND BETTER APOLOGETICS

By Solomon Grayzel

REALITIES OF JEWISH LIFE

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To signalize the publication of
"The Jewish Reconstructionist Papers"

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at 8:30 o'clock

At

THE JEWISH CLUB

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—o—

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"Reconstructionism and Jewish Student Activities"

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"Reconstructionism and the Laity"

Dr. MORDECAI M. KAPLAN will preside

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THE
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EDITORIALS

Religion's Stake in Democracy

BASIC to modern Jewish and Christian Protestant religion is the assumption that life here on earth is good and worthwhile, and that man should strive to make life more abundant and rich in possibilities. It is therefore the proper concern of religion to guard and cherish the basic ideals and values that make for life more abundant, and to proclaim and teach them to mankind. To this end, the worship-service and the sermon in the Synagogue and Church are, or should be, directed. For it is the primary duty of religion to sensitize the hearts and minds of men to basic ideals and moral values and to point the way toward human freedom and dignity.

However, we are living in an age today when some of the basic values upon which religion, as we know it, is predicated, are being challenged and denied. Social-economic forces are at the bottom of this tendency. When capitalism was young and expanding, when raw materials and markets were plentiful, the democratic tradition flourished. It was then generally agreed that man had a natural right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Today, however, the capitalist economy is definitely contracting. It no longer operates in a world of scarcity but in a world of potential abundance. It therefore becomes an anachronism. No wonder then that the philosophy of "rugged individualism" is in decline, while the trend toward economic collectivism and socialism is on the increase.

But corresponding to these realities in the economic life of this nation and other democratic countries there is developing a fairly rigid alignment of economic classes that bodes ill for the future of democracy and the democratic method.

We have been witnessing for some time now how the entrenched capitalist class, especially those of much wealth and property, have been attempting to throttle the democratic tradition of free speech, press and assembly and of government of, by, and for the people through majority rule by popular ballot. It it therefore heartening to read that the New York Presbyterian Synod, at its 54th annual meeting, recently went on record in opposition to loyalty oaths which 22 states have already passed, and in support of full freedom of expression for all, including advocates of dissenting political creeds.

It cannot be denied that vital religion can function only as long as the channels for free democratic expression are kept open, for should freedom of opinion and assembly be suppressed, there is nothing left for the Synagogue or Church but to serve as a handmaiden of the government in power, and bless all the inequities of the status quo. For, should fascism triumph, organized religion must serve the State or else go under. On the other hand,

should communism triumph, the Synagogue and Church and their religious traditions will be destroyed.

The Synagogue and Church and the cause of vital religion have a stake in the preservation and extension of democracy and the democratic method. It is not enough, however, to pass resolutions in favor of civil liberties. The Synagogue and Church must implement such resolutions by organizing committees, whose function it should be to develop techniques for rendering support to every agency that is battling for the preservation of democratic rights.

To this end *all liberal religious forces* should unite in a common effort to achieve these ends. The forces of reaction do not hesitate to organize; liberal forces cannot afford to remain fragmentary. Unless religious leaders show the vision and foresight of organizing for freedom while there is yet time, it may yet be that our country too will succumb to one kind of dictatorship or another, in which case the doom of established religious institutions would be sealed.

Jewish Civil Law and The Jewish Renaissance

ONE of the most disappointing aspects of modern Palestine, from the point of view of internal Jewish life, has been the reluctance of Jews there to take advantage of the Jewish courts in the settlement of their disputes. In a recent issue of *Ha-Arez,* (September 20), Mr. P. Dickstin, one of the prime movers in the effort to effect a living and functioning Jewish jurisprudence in Palestine, complains that Jews in Palestine still frequent the British courts, when they have the opportunity to develop, with the sanction of the government, a system of Jewish courts.

These courts, known as the Jewish Peace Tribunals (*Mishpat Shalom Ivri*) were organized as early as 1909. At that time, Palestine Jews were faced with the choice of resorting either to inefficient Consular Courts or to the Rabbinical Courts. They might have chosen the Rabbinical Courts, if the Rabbis had not insisted upon the inflexibility of traditional Jewish law. According to Moshe Burstein (*Self-Government in Palestine Since 1900,* p. 251), "The conservatism of the numerous Rabbinical Courts, all of which refused to modify the traditional Jewish Law in conformity with the changing conditions, made these Courts, too, not acceptable to the advanced part of the Jewish population."

Those who were interested in the renaissance of the Jewish people proceeded to organize the Jewish Peace Tribunals. Today, this system of Courts includes Local Tribunals, dealing with small cases, three District or Circuit Tribunals, and a Supreme Tribunal, which serves as the highest Court of Appeal. The judges, drawn from the most intelligent and informed citizens of local communities, are guided so far as possible by Jewish law; they draw, however, upon equity, the laws of the land, and upon precedents established by the Tribunals themselves. From time to time, conferences are held to set down rules of procedure, although these rules are generally of an informal character. The Peace Tribunals work mainly by arbitration and comply with the Arbitration Ordinances of the government; invariably, the Civil Courts uphold the actions of these Tribunals.

It is amazing that, in view of this remarkable development, the Jews in Palestine have to be urged to bring their litigations to the Jewish Peace Tribunals. If Palestine Jews expect to rebuild their civilization, they must develop a *civil law* of their own. This lesson should be clear from the history of our people in the diaspora. For centuries Jews, scattered all over the world, speaking various languages, exposed to various influences, succeeded in maintaining their unity and continuity by means of their *halakah,* their Jewish law, which governed not only ritual but civil relationships. Without Jewish *civil law,*

the Jewish people might have been easily absorbed by the nations; today, when Jewish civilization has the opportunity to take on a new lease of life, Jewish law must not be neglected. "The most important function associated with a civilization, that of setting up standards of action in our relations to one another, cannot be discharged by a people which is not in a position to pass udgment on the conflicting interests of its members." (*Judaism As A Civilization,* p. 469). Jews have come to realize the indispensability of the Hebrew language. Certainly law is equally vital. It is perhaps more vital even than language.

We in America who look to Palestine for the inspiration and the content necessary for the reconstruction of Jewish life have every right to protest vigorously against the tendency on the part of Palestine Jewry to forfeit their right to creating their own system of jurisprudence. Earnest Zionists in this country should let their fellow Jews in Palestine know that they agree with Mr. Dickstin in his protest against the prevailing indifference to the *Mishpat Shalom Ivri.*

The Jewish Artist Must Be Free

THE recent publication of "The Brothers Ashkenazi," a novel by I. J. Singer, has evoked resentment in certain quarters, because the author paints his chief Jewish characters so black. Simha Meyer Ashkenazi for example, is an unscrupulous, avaricious, and ruthless man, hell-bent for power, lusting after wealth, and determined to achieve his ends at the expense of his family and his workers. Some Jewish critics of the book contend that no one person in real life ever combined within himself so many objectionable qualities. Others maintain that Jews play into the hands of anti-Semites by depicting such Jewish characters, and that Mr. Singer has done a disservice to his people by writing "The Brothers Ashkenazi."

The former critics may be justified. If the criticism of Singer is leveled against him on literary grounds, the criticism is legitimate.If Simha Meyer Ashkenazi is an incredible and unconvincing character, the author has definitely failed. When any author makes the reader feel that a particular character has not even one redeeming feature, a sense of unreality has been created and the success of the portrayal is seriously jeopardized. Whether this criticism of Singer is justified or not depends upon the judgment of the individual reader; the "Jewish question" does not enter at this point at all.

But with the latter critics we disagree. We are well aware of the fact that Jews, like other mortals, would rather hear praise than criticism; and we can understand why Jews should be particularly sensitive to such criticism at a time when the anti-Semites are doing their worst to destroy the Jewish people. Nevertheless, we disagree with the critics of "The Brothers Ashkenazi." One of the glories of the Jewish people has been its unsparing self-criticism, and contemporary Jewry should not deviate from the age-old practice instituted by our Prophets. The passionate and eloquent utterances of Elijah, Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah might never have lived to influence the world if the timid souls in ancient Jewry had had their way. And, incidentally, what the Prophets said about the Jews makes Singer's portrayal of his characters seem very pale. The authors of the historical books in the Bible did not hesitate to denounce crime even in a King David.

It is true that the Christian world used the Prophets' denunciations as proof that God had rejected His people; but the question might be asked: did not the very opposite course, the idealization of Israel and the development of the doctrine of the Chosen People, contribute equally to the Christians' hatred of the Jewish people? The argument that anti-Semitism is engendered by this or that emphasis in Jewish literature reflects a flimsy and superficial understanding of the

causes of anti-Semitism. If the economic or political interests of a group are advanced by anti-Semitism, that group will utilize Jewish writings, whether they praise or denounce Israel.

In general, however, we Jews should welcome, and not discourage the efforts of our gifted authors. For too long have we alienated our poets and novelists, our artists and musicians. They have expended their talents upon other peoples and other civilizations. Only recently have they begun to evince an interest in Jewish life; only within the last few years have they turned their attention to the Jewish scene. For this new development, Jews who take Jewish life seriously should be grateful. But if Jews place restrictions upon their creative artists, tell them what they may write and what they may not, what they may paint and what they may not, these artists will promptly secede again. They must be unfettered, and Jews must be prepared for the consequences of the artists' honest scrutiny.

We are convinced that wholesome self-criticism will never do harm to our people. On the contrary, our people may be aroused by the challenge implicit in the criticism to take corrective measures and the world may be enriched by honest and forthright works of literary art.

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The Status of The Rabbinate

By Eugene Kohn

ONE of the most irritating answers that rabbis receive when urging parents to give their children an adequate Jewish education is: "I don't want my son to be a rabbi." The attitude toward the rabbinate implied in such a statement is poignantly expressive of the loss of prestige to which the rabbinate has been subjected. For it is in striking contrast with the esteem in which a rabbinic career was held by earlier generations. Before the era of Emancipation, the rabbi occupied the very pinnacle of the social hierarchy of Jewry. Every Jewish parent dreamed of having a son grow up to be a rabbi and felt honored if a daughter married a rabbi. What is responsible for the loss in status and prestige that has fallen to the lot of the rabbinate in modern times?

Many laymen are inclined to blame the rabbis themselves. They call attention to rabbis who seem to be satisfied with the role of popular lecturers on subjects about which they are frequently no better informed than the average man in their congregation, or who take pride in a display of brilliant but ineffectual oratorical fireworks, or who are content to do hack-work as executives organizing programs of "activities" for synagogues that are in reality but a sort of social club, or who, escaping these temptations, indulgently devote themselves to an esoteric learning which has no relevancy to modern life. Indeed, rabbi-baiting has become quite a favorite sport in certain circles, particularly among our intelligentsia. But there is little profit in such negative criticism and as little in apologetics designed to prove these charges false or exaggerated. Neither the criticism nor the apologetics can help us to obtain the type of Jewish religious leadership that is needed in our day. Only an analysis of the causes responsible for the lowered status of the rabbinate can afford a clue to the way in which that status can be raised.

I.

When we approach the problem in this manner, it becomes clear that the change in the position of the rabbinate is inci-

dental to and correlated with all the other changes that have taken place in Jewish life in consequence of the Emancipation. It is a direct result of the change from the otherworldly outlook of pre-Emancipation Judaism to the thisworldly outlook of modern times, and from the autonomous community life of the ghetto to the chaos that has attended the effort to reorganize Jewry on a denominational basis.

Before the Emancipation, the rabbinate was not a profession. It was, rather, an academic order that enjoyed certain prerogatives of authority. The degree or title of rabbi was conferred on a man because of his learning in the traditional literature of Torah. It could be conferred only by one who himself possessed the degree and it was the reward of years of painstaking study "by day and by night." Men who possessed the title did not necessarily exercise any office of authority in the community or receive any maintenance at the hands of the community. Their learning, however, was universally acknowledged as qualifying them to decide questions of Jewish law. The need for legal authority and centralized responsibility for the administration of Jewish law in a community led to the appointment of a particular rabbi to be *its* rabbi. In such instances, the rabbi was maintained by the community so that he could devote his whole time to Torah and to the community's leadership. In view of the ascetic regimen of the rabbi's life, his maintenance was usually meager, but this did not detract from his social standing in the community, for he was regarded as its highest dignitary and his word was law. But the rabbinate of a community was an office rather than a position, and was usually held for life unless the rabbi voluntarily accepted a call to some more important community.

The basis of the reverence for the rabbi and obedience to his decisions was the reverence for the Torah. The Torah was held to be the word of God revealed to Israel as the means of obtaining salvation in the world to come. Its interpretation and application to the concrete problems of daily life demanded a judicial authority and the rabbi served as that authority. Whatever he said in exposition of the Torah was itself Torah and vested with the sanctity of divine revelation. The questions that the rabbi was asked to adjudicate were not merely the ritualistic *she'elot* that Orthodox rabbis are called upon to answer even in modern times, but questions affecting every aspect of life, including business, domestic relations, and even many phases of criminal law. His services were therefore indispensable both to the orderly conduct of the community's mundane affairs and to the spiritual welfare of its members in the hereafter. This explains the prestige of the rabbinate and the eagerness with which men pursued rabbinic studies notwithstanding the ascetic rigor of the regimen imposed by the *yeshibot* and the scanty remuneration provided by the community.

It follows from the above that the duties of the rabbi and his habitual occupations were utterly different from those of the rabbi today. He was not expected to be a preacher. Preaching was generally the work of lay *maggidim* especially gifted for that type of oratory. He was not expected to occupy himself with the education of the child. He lectured in the *bet ha-midrash* but his expositions of law dealt with abstruse legal problems rather than with religion as that term is commonly understood today. The rabbi, furthermore, was not expected to officiate at weddings, funerals, or other religious rites, since the Law makes no distinction between rabbinate and laity in such matters. Indeed, between the rabbi in pre-Emancipation days and the rabbi of modern times, there is little in common save the name.

Since the authority and prestige of the rabbinate were based on the authority and prestige of the Torah as the revealed way of salvation, it was inevitable that the change from the supernaturalistic religion of the Middle Ages to the humanistic re-

ligion of our day would have a detrimental effect on the status of the rabbinate. When doubt began to insinuate itself as to the historicity of the traditional version of the revelation and as to the validity of the claim that the Torah offered the exclusive way to salvation, the rabbi, as exponent and interpreter of the Torah, no longer performed an indispensable function. Great numbers of Jews found that they could live in this world lives that afforded them more satisfaction, and a greater measure of self-expression by flouting the precepts of the Torah and ignoring the tenets maintained by the rabbis than if they adhered rigidly to them. The rabbi therefore if he wanted to retain any position of influence and leadership had to assume a new function. He had not only to define the demands of Jewish religion but to defend them. He became an apologist for whatever version of Judaism he accepted as valid. If he was in sympathy with the new currents of thought that called for a modification of traditional attitudes, he nevertheless had to appeal to traditional sources themselves to justify the change. For the Torah tradition was still the only cultural tradition familiar to his audience and therefore the only one to which he could refer in elucidating his ideas. And it goes without saying that if he was opposed to the new currents of thought, he would seek to justify his opposition by reference to traditional sources. Thus began the era of preaching. A new qualification was added to success in the rabbinate—the ability to convince through a sermon.

But this was only a first and transitional stage in the changing function of the rabbinate. It did not greatly change the quality of religious leadership. The rabbi still had to be a Jewish scholar in order to preach convincing sermons to a Jewish public many of whom were themselves well-versed in the Torah literature. With the extension to Jews of opportunities for secular culture and with the undermining of faith in the supernatural version of the Torah's origin, Jews ceased to interest themselves as heretofore in the literature of Torah, finding a substitute for it in the science, literature and art of the nations with which they wished to identify themselves. This discouraged preaching though it put no check to speech-making from the pulpit. For the essence of a sermon is its relation to a familiar and revered text. But people found no point in allusions to scriptural texts once these texts were no longer regarded as divinely revealed and indisputably authoritative. Even for mere purposes of illustration, "to point a moral or adorn a tale," there seemed little sense in referring to a literature that was fast becoming unfamiliar to most Jews, rather than to cultural material closer at hand. Indeed, the old traditional lore that was so venerated in the ghetto was now in disrepute by its very association with the ghetto, from which Jews were seeking an escape. Congregations began to demand of the pulpit not scholarship and logic, but the emotional excitement of perfervid oratory or the diversion of entertaining lectures on talked-of-topics. With such qualities as these at a premium and intimacy with the literature of Torah at a discount, it is not to be wondered at that the pulpit became the tribune from which many a vulgar spirit catered to the prevailing taste of a Jewishly illiterate laity.

II.

The social changes that have taken place in Jewry since the Emancipation have tended to reenforce the effect of ideological changes already discussed in degrading the status of the rabbinate. The reorganization of Jewish communal life, in response to the opportunity for Jewish participation on a basis of civil equality in the life of the modern nations, was predicated on the assumption that the Jews constituted a religious denomination rather than a nation. Since there was nothing in Jewish life corresponding to the Catholic hierarchy, this reorganization was carried out along lines imitative of Protestant Christianity and particularly

of those Protestant denominations that were organized on a congregational basis. In consequence, the rabbi ceased to be a functionary of the community and became the employe of a congregation.

Congregational rivalries introduced a competitive spirit among rabbis which tended further to degrade their calling. With rival congregations each seeking to outdo the other in the size of its membership and the magnificence of its building, the rabbi who was a "drawing card" was preferred and the rabbi who would not stoop to cater to vulgar tastes was at a disadvantage. Novelty being itself an attraction, many congregations resorted to the practice of frequent changes in their religious leadership whenever the interest of the members in the services or in the maintenance of the institution lagged, regardless of the cause of this waning of interest. Thus the tenure of the rabbi's position has been rendered insecure, and this insecurity threatens the spiritual independence of the rabbi. The lip-service often rendered to the freedom of the pulpit should not deceive us. True, the rabbi is seldom censured by his congregation for what he says from the pulpit. Congregations usually lack the candor to do this. But the free expression of an unpopular opinion brings a rabbi into disfavor, and he is then likely to lose his position on the ground of his not getting along with the members and not obtaining their cooperation. Even though a majority of the membership may respect and feel well-disposed toward the rabbi, if he prove offensive for any reason whatsoever to an influential group, or even at times, to an influential member of the congregation, he is in danger of forfeiting his position. For a rabbi can always be replaced, but a lavish contributor to the congregation's budget cannot.

It is true that prosperous congregations frequently maintain rabbis on high salaries and this sometimes gives laymen who do not subject the situation to analysis the impression that the rabbinate is a highly honored and dignified calling. But this is an illusion. Although congregational competition has led congregations of wealthy Jews to offer large financial rewards to successful pulpiteers, skilful in dramatizing their own personalities and keeping in the limelight of public attention, the number of rabbis who thus benefit is restricted to the number of wealthy pulpits. Other rabbis, though possessed of fine scholarship, intelligence and religious zeal, not only do not share in the material rewards of these stars of the pulpit, but suffer loss of prestige by comparison with them.

III.

The attempt to remodel Judaism in accordance with the organization of Protestant Christianity has had a bad effect on the rabbinate in other ways than those which proceed from the congregational form of religious organization. The status of the rabbinate has suffered as well from the attempt to identify its function in Jewish life with the function of the ministry in Christianity. The Christian minister is essentially a curate, a *seelensorger,* charged with responsibility to see that the individuals of his congregation conduct themselves in a manner which assures them of the salvation that the church holds forth for them. He is the pastor or shepherd, responsible for keeping his flock from straying into alien and forbidden paths. Such a function is in keeping with the whole historic development of Christianity.

The promise of Christianity is the promise that the individual, by identifying himself heart and soul with the historic personality of Jesus, whom he regards as the incarnation of all that is divine in human nature, can himself grow into the likeness of the divine, and achieve salvation. The spread of Christianity was due to this gospel propagated by a band of zealous apostles who felt it their mission to spread the faith by influence of their personal contacts with men. Every pastor feels himself a personal emissary of Christ and is so regarded by the members of his con-

gregation. When, therefore, in the course of his pastoral duties, he visits the home of one of his flock, his presence is greeted not merely as that of a kind friend but as that of a sanctified personality vested with extraordinary power to help men attain the grace of God. The parishioner is therefore disposed to unburden his soul to his pastor and submit himself to his guidance. Centuries of experience in such guidance has resulted in the development by the Church of a technique of pastoral ministration that undeniably has proved helpful in enabling the devout Christian to meet many of the difficult problems of life.

Judaism, however, has had another history and has developed a different type of religious leadership in response to different conditions. Jewish religion did not come into being as the result of the propaganda of any individual or group of individuals. The Jew does not seek communion with God by trying to model his personality after that of any other individual who played a preeminent part in history. He was taught to know God by a line of prophets, teachers, law-givers, poets, philosophers and mystics who interpreted the significant events of Jewish experience in a way that made him see in them the finger of God. Out of these experiences, ideals issued which found embodiment in rules of conduct, the *halakah.* The study of the Torah, the practice of the *mizvot,* and conformity to the *halakah* were the method by which Jews sought communion with God. The type of religious leadership that was indispensable to the Jew in quest of salvation was, therefore, not that of the pastor but that of the teacher, the man who was steeped in the religious and ethical tradition of the people and could guide the community in the development of those institutions through which the tradition could be preserved and developed. Not merely sympathetic understanding and religious devotion, but learning, social vision and intellectual power are of the essence of such leadership.

It is no deprecation of the significance of the ideal of the pastor as cherished by the Christian Church to say that the effort to remodel the rabbinate after its pattern has proved a dismal failure. It has in fact contributed greatly to the decline in influence and prestige of the rabbinate. An indiscriminate imitation of even the good institutions of another civilization, without thought as to how these must be modified in order to fit the pattern of our own invariably leads to unsatisfactory results. Such imitativeness seizes the externals of the alien institution and adopts them without grasping their true meaning, which is always involved in their relation to other elements of the civilization to which they belong. The feathers of the peacock are its glory, but when the jackdaw tries to deck himself in them, he is only a very ludicrous jackdaw.

In the popular demand that the rabbi, in imitation of the Christian clergy, pay pastoral visits to the members of his congregation, we have an instance of such unfortunate imitativeness. In making this demand no thought was given as to what the rabbi was to accomplish by these visits, nor was any doctrine developed as to how the layman should act when visited by the rabbi. Consequently such visits were entirely unrelated in people's minds with any religious function but were demanded as a social attention that congregants had a right to expect of a rabbi to whose support they contributed. Even in many Protestant churches which have suffered from the inroads of modernism, the prestige of the ministry has declined owing to the association of the clergy with a tea-drinking, cake-eating class of men more endowed with social graces than with a virile religious spirit. Among Jews, with whom there is no tradition of personal religious ministration, the abuse of the pastoral function is even more glaring. Many a conscientious rabbi has suffered because of his unwillingness to fritter away his time in meaningless social visits instead of devoting it to study and the solution of serious communal problems.

IV.

How can our analysis of the causes of the declining prestige and influence of the rabbinate help us to restore the rabbinate to a status of dignity and power commensurate with the importance of its function of religious leadership? Its place in the community can never again be that which it occupied in the ghetto, for the basis of the rabbi's authority as the spokesman and interpreter of a divine revelation necessary for salvation in the world to come has been undermined by the modern scientific outlook. But the rabbinate will occupy a position analogous to that which it held in the ghetto if we can create those conditions which would enable it to satisfy the need for a religious leadership that Jews will find indispensable to their salvation in this world, to the fulfillment of the best possibilities of their human nature. Our analysis of the causes of the decline in the status of the rabbinate gives us some clues as to how this objective may be reached.

We have seen that this decline was due to the fact that a changing attitude to Jewish tradition cut away the foundations of the rabbi's authority because the rabbi can no longer assume an interest in that tradition which it is his function to expound. But Jewish survival, as indeed the survival of any social group, demands a continuous development of that tradition by which the individual member identifies the group. Hence it is clear that, notwithstanding the unfamiliarity of most Jew-laymen with the vital elements of Jewish tradition, the rabbi must so present these to them as to make them feel the relevancy of Jewish tradition to their personal and social needs. This demands qualifications for the task of the rabbinate other than those demanded in the ghetto and hence a new type of rabbinical training, one that will equip the rabbi with a philosophical grasp of Jewish problems, and with new educational and social techniques by which traditional values can be brought home to Jews who have lost touch with Jewish tradition.

We have also seen that changes in the organization of Jewish life have conspired to deprive the rabbinate of its dignity and influence; that the break-up of the homogeneous community into a heterogeneous multitude of rival congregations has reduced the position of the rabbi to that of an employe of a private corporation, economically dependent on his ability to ingratiate himself with its members and hence not free to give the best that is in him to the service of Jewish religion. It follows, therefore, that any effort to enable the rabbinate to function for the welfare of Jewry must have regard not only for the need of developing a new type of rabbi but also for the need of developing a new type of communal organization and new standards of relationship between the rabbinate and the laity.

To do justice to either of these themes would require more space than can here be given them. Happily the former has already been adequately treated in an essay by Mordecai M. Kaplan entitled, "The Rabbinic Training for Our Day." (See *Judaism In Transition*, pp. 158-184). In this essay the idea is stretcssed that the rabbi must not only be equipped as in the past with a textual knowledge of the Torah literature but with an understanding of it in the light of the philosophy, psychology and history of religion. In addition he must be trained in those arts on which depends the success of his educational and social work in implementing Jewish religious and ethical ideals.

But all this education would be wasted if the man who spent years of painstaking study in acquiring this sort of training finds himself, upon graduation from a rabbinical college, compelled to accept a position in which he is expected to fritter away his time in useless social attentions to the members, or to vie with political spell-binders in propagandist harangues, or to exhaust his energies in attention to administrative routines for which laymen are equally or better qualified, or to teach *alef bet* to children, or to engage in the hundred and one petty activities that are

commonly demanded of the rabbi as a condition of his retaining his position. Clearly, something must be done with the organization of the Jewish laity to make possible the type of religious leadership which modern conditions demand.

We have seen that the waning importance of the rabbinate was in great measure a consequence of the reorganization of Jewry by which it was changed from a scattered nation divided into local communities into a denomination divided into small congregational units. If the rabbinate is ever to recover its lost status, it must be by a reversal of this process. Only as Jewish religion is recognized as a communal interest to be dealt with as an organic function of an integrated Jewish community, and the rabbi becomes again a functionary of the community and not an employe of a congregation will the rabbinate resume a position similar to that which it once occupied. True, there will still remain the problem of the rabbi's economic dependence on the community. That problem is inherent in any professional rabbinate and cannot be avoided. But that problem would not then be nearly as acute as it is under present conditions. For the broader the basis of the source of the rabbi's income, the greater would be the measure of his freedom from arbitrary interference by those who contribute to it. In the public school system there is a problem of academic freedom, but the teacher in the public school system is much freer from interference by the taxpayer, than a teacher in a private school which is dependent on tuition fees is free from dictation by the parents of the children he teaches. Even under existing conditions, the broader the base of membership and financial support of a congregation, the less dependent is the rabbi on the personal reaction of any individual or group of individuals affiliated with it. If then the rabbi's congregation were coextensive with the entire community, or, at least with all those members of the community who share a similar ideological point of view, his economic security would be far greater than it is at the present time. This would enable him to concentrate his attention on his proper task of religious leadership without being distracted by any anxious concern for his personal safety and that of his family.

Upon religious organizations must rest the major responsibility for making the rabbinate a safe career for men who are prepared to devote themselves wholeheartedly to prepetuating and developing the religious tradition of our people. These organizations must apply themselves to purging our religious life of the vulgar competitive spirit which is responsible for the corruption of the rabbinate, for creating those conditions that tend to repel from a rabbinic career our finer and more sensitive souls and attract to it our coarser and duller spirits. Our congregational unions must educate the synagogue to the importance of making it possible for the rabbi to concentrate his time and attention upon the religious and cultural interests of the congregation and not dissipate them on trifling activities that any inteligent layman could do as well. And they must demand of the rabbinical colleges whose rabbis they recommend to positions of leadership that these colleges equip their graduates with an education adequate to meet the demands of religious leadership under existing conditions of Jewish life. These objectives must be attained, if the Jewish people in these times of social crisis are to find their religion helpful in sustaining their spirits and encouraging them to persevere in that loyalty to spiritual ideals which constitutes the service of God.

Good and Better Apologetics

By SOLOMON GRAYZEL

LET it be said at the very outset that of all the books on Germany and on the German Jews which have come to my attention in the past three years, Marvin Lowenthal's *The Jews of Germany** is the most interesting, the most revealing, and, if the term be applicable to a horror story, the most enjoyable. Charming in style and balanced in structure, the book should be a source of delight to the reader, and of envy to the professional historian. Lowenthal has performed the feat of giving within four hundred pages a connected history of sixteen centuries, and has done this without permitting the interest of the reader to falter for as long as a single page.

At the same time, it is apparent that in addition to his undoubted gift of style Lowenthal had another great advantage over the usual historian. The physical limits which he set for his book made attention to detail impossible. He was compelled to generalize. No professional historian of the German Jews would have dared to indulge in generalizations and parallels like those which make this book stimulating reading. For to say that most generalizations when closely scrutinized require modification is to pronounce a truism. The most unjustified statement which I can recall is one which occurs at the very beginning of the volume. The author, apparently following Christian apologetes, says, "Meanwhile the early Christian, usually a Jew by upbringing, learned the lesson of intolerance from the mother faith. . . ." There is practically nothing in the relations of first century Judaism and Christianity to validate any such explanation of the intolerance expressed in the gospels, while Judaeo-Christian intolerance of a later date could not compare with that of orthodox Christianity. Yet on the whole, Lowenthal's generalizations are not only clever, sometimes brilliant, but they also contain enough truth to make them acceptable in a work which is not meant to be an exhaustive history, but an essay, and which does not aim at scientific thoroughness but at a popular explanation of a tragic state of affairs.

The book's real weakness is of quite a different nature, common to almost all current Jewish apologetics. It would be ridiculous to tell Mr. Lowenthal that he should have written a different book. But in view of the fact that his book falls into the category of Jewish apologetics, it is in place to evaluate it from that point of view, and to raise the question, as important at this time as it ever was in Jewish history, what the point of departure should be for Jewish apologetic literature.

For whom is Lowenthal's book intended, and who will read it? Pressed by enemies on every side, the Jews feel the need for counteracting their propaganda, for competing with those enemies for the sympathy of the as yet unprejudiced. Yet Lowenthal's book is eloquent in refutation of the theory that such a task can succeed. Hate is stronger than love; an economic illusion wins against a fortress of concrete logic. For a century the German Jews used idealism, truth, and common sense to fight stupidity and lies, yet the latter carried off the victory. "Apologetics, even if factual, is never as attractive as denunciation, no matter how fanciful" (p. 314). Evidently the effective answer to denunciation is denunciation equally vituperative, rabble-rousing on a scale grander than that of the enemy. Thank God that the Jew is inherently incapable of sinking so low. What then can be accomplished by means of dignified apologetics?

* *The Jews of Germany*, by Marvin Lowenthal; Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1936.

As far as potential enemies are concerned, we can hope to convert a number of the liberal intellectual class whose worthlessness as defenders of Jewish freedom is proved beyond peradventure by the events in the German universities. But even for this limited purpose of converting the cultured, book-reading class to anti-anti-Semitism, it is not enough merely to publish books. By all reports Lowenthal's book is doing well—for a Jewish book. But has anyone noted that it has become a best-seller in Gentile circles? And where is the Jewish millionaire who will pay for giving this book as wide distribution as the meanest of anti-Jewish screeds is getting at this very time?

After all, Jewish apologetic literature is read by Jews to a much greater extent than by Gentiles. It is well that Jews read it. No one comes in touch with certain classes of our people, particularly the so-called intellectuals, without realizing that they are as open to anti-Jewish propaganda as are the intellectual Gentiles. Moreover, where the Gentile anti-Semite joins the external enemies and may thus increase Jewish internal solidarity, the Jewish self-critic, filled with shame and bitterness over what he imagines are the faults of the people with whom he is identified, spreads a sense of defeat and brings about disintegration and panic. Let us hope that Lowenthal's book is being read by such people. It is well for them to be told that sixty million Germans, and Heaven knows how many million Americans, can be wrong.

But for such Jews as well as for liberal Gentiles it is not enough to explain that the Jews were innocent victims. Both classes are more or less ready to grant as much. The Gentile, however, seeks an explanation for the apparent insult to his ancestry on the part of the Jew who refused to acknowledge what that ancestry considered true and good. The harassed Jew seeks an explanation for the burden on posterity which former generations of Jews did not hesitate to leave behind when they refused to solve their problem by assimilation.

It is therefore fair to ask whether we would not achieve more by paying greater attention than we have to Jewish life, by giving at least as much dignified publicity to Judaism and its ideals, to the Jewish people and their manner of life, to the positive elements, as is usually given to the relations with the environment. People must learn to appreciate the why and how not only of persecutions and expulsions, but no less so of "Jewish stiff-neckedness."

In attempting to do this we would come up against a difficulty resulting from Jewish apathy toward distinctively Jewish learning. More than many other groups the Jews have been content to pay millions for defense when it is too late for defense, but not a cent for tribute to the life of their own ancestors while such tribute may still arouse respect among Gentiles and admiration among Jews. Mr. Lowenthal must have felt the results of this attitude when he probably looked for available material to describe that Jewish life which made the Jew survive. A glance at his bibliography and index will show that he has treated this phase too briefly. The fault is not his. Such facts are still largely hidden in response and still unrelated to other facts and events so that their true significance remains unrevealed. That must be the reason why Lowenthal limited his treatment of what went on "Behind the Gates" to one chapter of about eighteen pages, a charming chapter, offering, to the mind of this reviewer, a far stronger defense of the medieval Jew than the more detailed story of economic and political oppression. Reading it one senses the dignity, the grandeur of Jewish life. Hence the regret that this chapter had to be so brief because Jewish scholarship has not been encouraged to do more preparatory work in this field.

Fully half of *The Jews in Germany* deals with the Modern Period of Jewish History, beginning with the age of Mendelssohn. At least a third of the volume

deals with the 20th century. Quite properly the author used the history of previous centuries to show the continuity of life and to drive home the essential similarity of the causes which brought about similar results. Throughout, human stupidity is shown to be the tool used by economic and social privilege seeking to entrench itself. The author draws the inevitable conclusion, one with which the reader of his book is bound to agree, namely that the Jewish struggle is part of the struggle of all humanity for greater freedom against entrenched greed and institutionalized folly. But what if the Jews do not see their place in the world and fail to join the struggle before the forces of evil overwhelm them? What if their own privileged group identifies itself with those others who hold humanity in thrall? In such an event they are themselves in part to blame, if misfortune comes upon them like that of the German Jews. Lowenthal has given us not only an explanation of the past, but also a warning for the future.

Men like Mr. Lowenthal, who possess the stylistic and intellectual key which gives them entreé to the mind of book-reading circles, are a great asset to Jewish efforts at self-vindication. It were tragic if the author of the volume here under consideration, as well as of *A World Passed By,* and of *Gluckel von Hameln,* went off to guard and cultivate other people's vineyards. We hope he will write more Jewish books.

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Realities of Jewish Life*

A writer in the *Ha-Arez* (Tel-Aviv Daily) complains that, in the diaspora, the Jews consider Hebrew a holy tongue and use it for cultural and spiritual purposes, whereas they use other languages for their practical and business purposes. In Palestine, however, they reverse the process. They use Hebrew for practical and business purposes, and turn to German and English for their higher interests.

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A traveling Hebrew exhibit, known as *Yeme Bialik,* has been arranged in Palestine for Jews in Germany. Visible and tangible evidences are presented of the extent to which Hebrew culture has penetrated every phase of Jewish life in Palestine, including the Hebrew University, school, theatre, shop, factory, advertising, travel, and communication.

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In Tel-Aviv there were 69 houses in 1910. There are now 86 schools there.

Three years ago 37 kindergarten children in Tel-Aviv spoke 11 different languages. Now they all speak Hebrew.

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At its convention held in Marinbad, attended by 300 delegates, the *Agudat Yisrael* (Union of Orthodox Jews) reported on its activities. It owns 10,000 dunams of land in Palestine, of which 6,000 are being cultivated by members of the organization. There are 21 Agudah *kvuzot.* In the diaspora, it conducts a school system which consists of 287 schools, with a registration of 32,738 pupils. 225 of these schools are located in Poland, with a registry of 27,000 pupils. The rest are in Rumania, Lithuania and Czechoslovakia. There are 11 schools with a registry of 950 in Palestine. The Agudah conducts, in addition, young people's study groups for girls and boys in the teens, and *haksharah* camps. It has its own funds—*Keren ha-Yishub;* and publishes magazines and text-books.

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The number of students in the Hebrew

* Readers are invited to send in items of interest.

University has grown steadily: 171 in 1933, 284 in 1934, 412 in 1935 and 674 in 1936. 385 of the students come from Poland, 135 from Palestine, 46 from Germany, 44 from Czechoslovakia. 18 per cent of the students are below the age of 20; 63 per cent are from 20-23; 11 per cent from 24-26. 57 per cent earn their own way. The budget of the University for the year 1936-37 is £86,868.

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In the last ten years 538,000 Jews migrated from Europe. Of that number 186,184 migrated from Poland. 76,242 of that number settled in Palestine, 27,755 in the United States, 15,466 in Canada, 30,098 in Argentine and 13,098 in Brazil. During the same period, 18,888 migrated from Lithuania, 6,000 from Latvia and 22,272 from Rumania. In Manchukuo, China and Japan there are now 16,000 Jews. They constitute 11 per cent of the Europeans in the Far East.

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It is estimated that the government revenue from imports to Palestine will be this year only £1,800,000 as compared with last year's £2,870,000.

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Many Gentile officials in Biro-Bidjan have learned to speak Yiddish. The commanding officer, a Latvian, learned the language so well that he delivers addresses and public lectures in it. On the other hand, the Jewish officials have tried to suppress the use of Yiddish, and it was only the intervention of the Moscow *Emes* that has put a stop to the Russification of Biro-Bidjan.

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Bronislaw Huberman, in discussing the organization of a Jewish orchestra in Palestine, alluded to the fact that he found it hard to get musicians who played the trumpet. "If the Jews would have to capture Jericho over again, they wouldn't have enough trumpeters and would have to rely on the help of those who wield the violin bow." The budget, £65,000 for three years, has been met; 50 per cent of that is to cover the deficit for the next three years.

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